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# **Women and Work in the History of British Adult Education: with critical review of R. Peers, T. Kelly and R. Fieldhouse**

Machiko SHIBAHARA

## **Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the framework of 'British adult education' from the perspective of women and work. British adult education has been characterized as 'liberal and non-vocational,' through historical researches on its development particularly from the 19<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> century. In this paper, first of all, the works of R. Peers, T. Kelly and R. Fieldhouse, who have been influential researchers in the history of British adult education are reviewed, in order to understand how they described its history and sculptured its distinctiveness. Secondly, it is examined that how woman learners were understood in each work. From these examinations, the limitations of the 'British adult education' framework will be revealed. Finally, this paper looks into a movement that helped women to engage with occupations, which has been outside of those frameworks but has some distinctive educational aspects. By analyzing learning and teaching found in that movement, it would be possible to have foundations for exploring adult education that can overcome the limitations imposed by the previous framework of 'British adult education'.

'British adult education' was formed uniquely in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain when the working-class movement was developed remarkably. Britain experienced Industrial Revolution, the earliest among other countries; as a result, the huge population of the working-class emerged. Being exposed to political, economical and cultural changes in their lives, the working-class began to seek for educational opportunities that had been closed to them. In this process, 'British adult education' was gradually formed; therefore, as being suggested from many of historical researches on it, it is not found only in theory, but also, in variety of movements, lives of people, activities at institutions such as classes, and interactions between different social classes. In short, these various aspects of adults learning constitute the history of 'British adult education.' Therefore, it is necessary to see how the history is surveyed in order to understand the nature of 'British adult education.'

'British adult education' has been a subject of study for a long time. As early as 1919, the historical survey on British adult education was done by the Government's Adult Education Committee under the Ministry of Reconstruction and the report is known as "1919 Final Report"<sup>1)</sup>. In this report, the historical development of education for the working-class adults was fully researched. Also, it is understood that, based on that research, the learning/teaching

strategy for liberal and non-vocational adult education was developed. Since then, this has been the distinctive feature of British adult education until today.

The 'liberal and non-vocational' characteristic of adult education was mainly generated from the university adult education movements that began in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, it reflects the ethos of the ancient university, such as humanity and non technical and anti-vocational. 'Liberal and non-vocational' adult education is especially symbolized by the partnership between Workers' Educational Association (WEA) and the universities. WEA was founded in 1903 and organized many classes at the universities for the working-class. Reflecting the practices in university adult education, 'liberal and non-vocational' determined not only the contents but also the methods of education. As contents, it included a variety of subject such as citizenship, history, sociology, music, language, literature, drama and so on. As methods, it was represented as "tutorial class", which was the dominant feature of university adult education. In such class, it was considered that students and teachers formed a group of "fellows"<sup>2)</sup>, and syllabus, reading, discussion and lectures were used as useful learning/teaching tools.

After the 1919 Report, adult education became projects that received financial support from the Government. However, from 1950's onwards, the funding towards adult education declined; instead, vocational education was more considered to be important target for public investment. Especially, under the Thatcher's Government, whose mission was to cure 'the British Disease,' adult learning was thought to be related more closely to economical issues of the society. As a result, nowadays, British adult education is considered as 'legacy' of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Instead, 'lifelong learning' policies, which are connected with EU's 'employability,' became widely accepted.

As globalization is progressing in many parts of the world, including Japan, for more and more adults, 'work' becomes serious issue. They need not only enhance and keep updating their skills and knowledge, but also need to think of their lifelong careers. Also, society must have social and cultural structures to support such learning needs. Considering this context, it is important to re-examine the framework of 'adult education' and draw implications towards learning/teaching strategy for working adults in the current society. Particularly, I would like to argue what implications we could have from the British adult education to Japan's context, where 'adult education' was not formed as distinctively as in Britain.

However, in order to achieve such aim, it is necessary to re-examine critically the framework of adult education. I particularly consider that it is important to take perspectives of women and work, which has been outside of the framework of "British adult education." In England, as early as the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) became a pioneer in the philosophy of women's emancipation by publishing "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" (1792). As a lower middle-class woman herself, she advocated the

significance for women to have occupations for women. In her advocacy, it could be interpreted that women's occupational independence is the central issues among education, marriage, family, even suffrage. By the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by Wollstonecraft's advocacy, the early feminism movement began to grow. One of their central issues was occupational independence of the middle-class women, who were considered not to work but forced to look for means for their living. These women's hardships were symbolized as lives of 'governess' through novels and drawings.

It is suggested from such development of the feminism movement that there are contradictions between women and occupation, and overcoming it is essential for women's emancipation as human being. Therefore, I emphasize the importance of examining learning/teaching found in such feminism movement, most of which has not been considered as adult education. In fact, as D. Thompson pointed out, the more the working-class movement developed, the more women played a role not as workers but mothers or wives; as a result, they became less equal members in the movement<sup>3)</sup>. Thus, under the framework of British adult education, it is quite difficult to meet women's needs and engage them into learning as equally as men.

This paper, first of all, argues how R. Peers, T. Kelly and R. Fieldhouse sketched out the framework of 'British adult education' by reviewing their works. Each description of the history must be affected by the time when they were written and their roles in adult education. Secondary, it focuses on how women learners were described in these works. Furthermore, it looks at the movement for women's occupational independence, in the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, and argues in what aspects we could say they had the factors of adult education. Through this process, I would like to gain foundation for argument on the possibility of adult education that could support learning/teaching for working women.

## **1. Frameworks of the three researchers of the history of British adult education**

### **(1) R. Peers "Adult Education: a comparative study" (1958) – defining the field of adult education**

Robert Peers (1888-1972) was appointed in 1920 as the first professor of adult education in Nottingham University College. "Adult Education: a comparative study", which is one of his most important works, was written with the intention to "show that we have been developing through the centuries a conception of adult education." Therefore, he began with the historical survey of adult education in Britain and included the domestic and international movements of adult education in the middle of 20<sup>th</sup> century, developed the argument to the possibility and methods of adults learning, and philosophical consideration of adult education.

It is important to understand how he portrayed the history of adult education because through that process he tried to establish Adult Education as a field of academic study, where the possibility and methods of adult could be explored. He was especially focusing on the development of university adult education in the latter half of 19<sup>th</sup> century to the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through the historical description, he implied university tutorial classes contributed to the educational requirements of the age, and union of academics and working people for the purpose of adult education could be regarded as a stage towards the realization of democracy. Also, he suggested at that time many factors became the encouraging factors of adult education. Examples for this are 1870 Education Act, widening of the franchise among the working-class men, the economic growth of the society.

Another feature of this historical research was that he tried to set the boundaries of adult education. He said "I realize that I have somewhat arbitrarily limited the field, to the exclusion of many activities often comprehended within the term 'adult education'. This is ... partly also to the need for defining the boundaries ... it is convenient to confine the actual term 'education' to the more direct and continuous efforts"<sup>4)</sup>.

Based on such historical survey, he developed the field of adult education that has unique understanding of adult learners, the role of tutors (teachers), and learning/teaching methods. At the same time, he defined the characteristic of 'liberal and non-vocational' that had been 'tradition' of British adult education. According to him, 'liberal' is concerned with 'the methods, and purpose of the particular study as upon the nature of the subject,' also, 'the flexibility of mind, ability to judge objectively between confliction and willingness to examine and reach firm conclusion on matter in which they are involved as citizens'<sup>5)</sup>.

In short, Peers' historical research on British adult education was focused on mainly university adult education, and through this, he emphasized the role of university in adult education, and suggested possible future development as an educational field.

## **(2) T. Kelly "A History of Adult Education in Great Britain: from the middle ages to the twentieth century" (1970) – as a social history of adults learning**

Thomas Kelly (1902-1992) was professor of adult education and Director of Extra-Mural Studies in the University of Liverpool. This book was first written in 1970, and then reprinted several times. Around 1970, in Britain, the Government took more active approaches toward vocational education, and 'traditional' adult education, which depended much on voluntary initiatives, was under the threat of the reducing financial support. In such time, he was arguing that there had been, from the middle ages to 20<sup>th</sup> century, always the needs of people for access to education and knowledge, and voluntary initiatives to satisfy such needs. It was important to have such perspective in order to appreciate properly the provision of adult learning in the contemporary society.

He was quite critical about previously how the history of British adult education had been analyzed. Many of the researches focus on Industrial Revolution and the development after that. He did not divide the historical period in that way, saying such view is ‘incomplete and misleading’<sup>6)</sup>. He included as adult education not only institution-based initiatives, such as adult schools and university extension, but also, a variety of social and cultural aspects of adult learning, such as religion, churches, newspapers, books, libraries, museums, coffee houses, pubs, and so on.

These ‘tools’ for learning were diffused through 19<sup>th</sup> century among not only the upper working class, but also the wider working population. There must have been their passionate desire towards education and knowledge, and the middle-class took the initiatives to provide institution-based education and learning opportunities for them. However, as Kelly pointed out the middle-class ‘commonly overestimated the education of working people’; moreover, they ‘were for the most part too patronising, too austere and utilitarian ... they forgot about the need for recreation; they forgot about the joy of education.’<sup>7)</sup> Therefore, he was quite critical about dealing with only institutionalised education for adults as ‘British adult education’.

From his work, it is implied that learning is to be embedded in every aspect of people’s lives, and that makes the dynamism of society. Thus, his way of describing the history of British adult education is like to sketch out the social history of adults learning in Britain. In fact, he said, if it was possible, “I would have preferred to call the book not “A History of Adult Education”, but “A History of the Education of Adults”<sup>8)</sup>.

### **(3) R. Fieldhouse et al. “A History of British Adult Education” (1996) – limitations and possibility of adult education in the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Roger Fieldhouse (1940-) was, when the book was written, professor of adult education in University of Exeter and Director of Continuing Education. Also, he had experience as a tutor organizer at WEA. With this experience, he grew his interests in political issues in the history of British adult education.

Fieldhouse said that the aims of the book are “to set the historical development of British adult education in its wider policy and ideological context; to examine its various forms and formulations; and to identify what purpose or purposes (if any) it served”. Although he was the main author and editor in this book, these aims were interwoven by other authors into each chapter. He included as “historical development”, when the society became industrialized to when it became post-industrialized in 20<sup>th</sup> century. Through examining this historical development, this book attempts to clarify the complex issues in British adult education which academic and practitioners must to face.

After the historical surveys of British adult education, he concluded with the limitations of adult education. It has been, since the beginning, preoccupied with social classes, and inequalities and oppressions; however, it often failed to achieve the initial aim. He said ‘adult education ‘can contribute to the changing the hegemonic culture and ideology but in practice it is much more likely to be incorporated into the oppressive structure of society and used to divert people’s attraction away from the causes towards the symptoms of inequality, or to identify oppression within a narrow paternalistic and reductionist social class paradigm. It will then offer “solution” within that paradigm’<sup>9</sup>).

In the contemporary society, it is more required for people to have access to learning that engaging with not just social class issues, but also a variety of issues such as gender, peace, minority, environment, and so on. In the mid of 1990’s, when undoubtedly the post-modernism was influencing society, he continuously asked the readers what roles adult education should play.

Thus, he tried to clarify the role of WEA, which has been the most important agent in British adult education since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. WEA is voluntary organization from its origin, and their campaigns and practices have influenced the public. They have the ‘most experience in attempting to combine voluntarism with professionalism and public funding’<sup>10</sup>), although the funding was extremely reduced. Confronting with the problem that British adult education historically has had, ‘they must engage with a wide variety of social movements and ultimately be committed to a democratic social purposes embracing equality and justice’<sup>11</sup>).

## **2. Women in the works of Peers, Kelly and Fieldhouse**

In the previous section, I reviewed the three works of prominent historical researchers in British adult education. Each work reflects the social and political conditions of the time when it was written, and what roles the authors played in adult education. All of them refer to women learners in description of its history. In this section, I would like to sketch out how these works view women learners and their needs within British adult education.

According to Peers, liberal adult education is ‘appealing to the broad, humane interests which common to men and women as human beings and members of the larger society of the nation and the world’<sup>12</sup>). Thus, adult education includes comprehensively women and men, as equal citizens who must have the rights to access to education throughout their lives. Focusing on university adult education, he described university extension movement was ‘one of the factors in the emancipation of women, and their increasing participation in adult education is symptomatic of something in the nature of a social revolution’<sup>13</sup>). This movement was started by a series of lectures by James Stuart (1843-1913) in 1867, in order to meet the needs of woman teachers who sought for knowledge about teaching. He viewed that British

adult education was developed while the society became industrialized and pursued democracy. Therefore, the process that women learners increasingly gained the access towards education was parallel to this social development.

Kelly, as well as Peers, thought of the Stuart's extension lectures as one of the most prominent feature of British adult education, and emphasized its importance. 'Hitherto adult education had been, broadly speaking, a man's world ... women had been either firmly excluded,... or admitted with reluctance ... Now for the first time a major adult education organization had arisen which placed the needs of women in the front of its programme'<sup>14)</sup>. Indeed, before this extension lectures, there had been women learners in adult schools, evening schools, mechanics institutes, women's clubs, and so on, but many of them were separated from men.

Also, he mentions 'women's institutes,' which were grown through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1920 to 30's, voluntary women's institutes began to grow in the rural areas of not only England but also Wales and Scotland. In this Canadian-born institute, women were able to access social interactions and public affairs, when they were considered to be inside of domestic spheres. Kelly described this institutes as a place for citizenship education for women because 'Here for the first time they learned something about the conduct of public business, about housing, water supplies, sanitation, diet, education, child welfare, about the whole range of government and local government functions ... they learned how to speak in public, how to frame resolutions, perhaps even how to take the chair'<sup>15)</sup>. He looked into more closely learning opportunities where women participated; however, the description of these seems only accompanying finding in adult education, as one important factor that formed the social dynamism.

In Filedhouse's book, there is a chapter, "Women and Adult Education," written by Roseanne Benn. Neither Peers nor Kelly did attempt to focus only on women in British adult education. However, Benn argued how the educational provision to adult women developed as the social position of women improved. From the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1990's, she showed a variety of aspects where education for women and women learners could be found. She pointed out, 'women were present in adult education in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries but not treated equally, with a curriculum restricted to the division of labour in the home and the demands for a cheap workforce'<sup>16)</sup>. Her argument undoubtedly requires the researchers to consider the existence of women as learners and having other roles in adult education. However, she was not trying to re-consider the framework of 'adult education', based on her findings, which has excluded women or accepted them only secondly to men.

From reviewing the three works with the perspective of women, the findings could be summarized in the following. First of all, each historical survey was based on rather practical incentives than purely historical interests; in other words, there were intentions to develop



understanding of adult learners, methods, strategy, the role of tutors, and so on. Secondary, provision for women and women as learners are compatible with the principles of adult education; therefore, all three researchers not only included the description of women but also viewed it important. Thirdly, on the other hand, they conceived women only within the framework of 'British adult education', and were not eager to question its implication on the practice of adult education. Finally, with the framework of 'British adult education', women learners are conceived, unconsciously, supplementary to the whole and vocational learning, no matter how serious needs for learners would be underestimated. And this is not just conceptual issue, but would influence the way of organizing the practice of adult education.

### **3. Movement for women's occupational independence – unwritten part of the history of adult education**

Based on the argument above, in this section, I look into the movement for women's occupational movement, developed in the Victorian era, and examine the adult educational aspects of it. Although this has not been included in the historical surveys of British adult education, in this movement, there were work-oriented educational provisions to support and facilitate the lower middle-class women to engage with occupations.

In the middle of 19<sup>th</sup> century, the earliest feminism group, called 'Langham Place group', was formed. And their prime concern was the employment of women. By the 1851 census, it was revealed that the number of women between 20 and 40 years of age exceeded the number of men, and as a result, obviously they were unable to be married. When women were considered to be 'angel at home', this meant that many women had to live against society's belief and custom. Thus, these women were called as 'superfluous women', and women's employment became the public concern<sup>17)</sup>.

The members of the Langham Place group were the upper middle-class women; therefore, they did not need to have means of living. However, they were quite enthusiastic about the emancipation of women, and they believed strongly that women's economic independence was a key for that. Thus, they formed an organization called 'Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW)' in 1859, with purpose to support the lower middle class women<sup>18)</sup>.

SPEW, existing organization till today<sup>19)</sup>, launched several pioneering projects, such as Law-copying office, Victoria Press, adult classes for arithmetic and bookkeeping, and Ladies Institute. Law-copying office and Victoria Press were initiated by SPEW in order to create new occupation fields for women other than governess. At that time, governess was considered only occupation that the middle-class women could be engaged with, but it was not only badly paid, but also governess was often isolated from the society. Adult classes for arithmetic and bookkeeping and Ladies Institute were created to be new learning sites for women who

looked for jobs.

I argued, elsewhere, about the nature of the SPEW from the perspective of adult education, with close examination on each project mentioned above<sup>20</sup>. Based on this argument, I would like to focus on the following four aspects of the movement, in which some important educational characteristics can be recognized. This movement was run by both magazine “English Woman’s Journal (EWJ)” and SPEW. EWJ was started in 1858 and ended in 1863, during which SPEW reported its projects to EWJ.

### **(1) Pioneering the field of women’s work**

First of all, this movement was aimed at not just providing vocational training, but assisting women to have means for supporting themselves. The Langham Place group started publishing EWJ as their own journal, and this became the foundation for SPEW. EWJ was not distributed widely, but now it is known as one of the earliest English feminism magazines<sup>21</sup>. EWJ set its role as ‘to consider the chief obstacles which meet a woman desirous of adopting any professional career, and the best way of helping her to overcome them’<sup>22</sup>. In EWJ, although a variety of issues around women and work were discussed, it tried to reveal the situations where lower middle-class women were in, to create and expand room for assisting women to overcome them.

Among the early feminists, the women’s occupational independence was the core issue. The main founders of EWJ and also the main activists in the Langham Place group were Barbara L. S. Bodichon (1827-91) and Bessie R. Parkes (1820-1925). Bodichon was known as the early suffragist who published in 1854, “A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws of England concerning Women.” This was particularly regarded with the position of married women and proposals for their property rights. After this campaign failed, Bodichon thought that it was necessary for women to have means for living in order to acquire such rights. Thus, in 1857, she published another pamphlet “Women and Work”, and this became the starting point of EWJ and SPEW. In short, work-oriented educational provision in this movement was aiming at the realization of women’s emancipation.

### **(2) Meeting the needs of lower middle-class women**

SPEW, as its name indicates, aimed at expanding ‘rooms to work, encouragement to work, an open field with a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work’<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, SPEW’s primary role was to provide opportunities in which women could gain some occupational training; at the same time, they claimed the importance and usefulness of women employment toward the society and employers. Soon after the name of SPEW was known, women who sought for help needed not only occupational training, but assistance for their lives with paid work. As shown below, the women who sought for assistance were in various situations.

The following analysis, compiled from the Society's applications are received at the office.

1. Those who have been governesses, and 30, 40, 50, or 60 years of age, wish to turn to something else.
2. Reduced in circumstances, suddenly or gradually, and totally untrained to anything.
3. Have "kept house" for relatives; otherwise totally untrained.
4. Young women from 17 to 25, badly educated; wanting "anything not menial," or "anything genteel."
5. Governess, and those experienced in other kinds of work, who have become deaf; often from overstrain of the nervous system.
6. Widows of every class, wishing to become lady housekeepers, or matrons "in some light situation."
7. Wives with invalid husbands and young children.<sup>24)</sup>

SPEW had to meet the needs of these women and provide training opportunities. For example, Jessie Boucherett (1825-1905), the founder of SPEW, opened adult classes for arithmetic and bookkeeping to women in 1860. This was a quite work-oriented project because it was intended to acquire necessary skills for employment. However, the teaching role that Boucherett played was beyond just teaching them. She wrote in 1863, "A Hints on Self-Help for Young Women." Here, inspired by Samuel Smiles' famous book "Self Help" (1859), she claimed "Self-reliance founded on self-knowledge" is as necessary as air to one who must get her own livelihood,"<sup>25)</sup> and discussed perseverance, business habits, how to choose business, duty and independence and so on.

### **(3) Advocating new occupations as alternatives to existing women's work**

Both EWJ and SPEW advocated the alternatives to the existing social structure and customs that acted as obstacles for women's occupational independence. Especially, Law-Copying Office and Victoria Press, which SPEW took their initiatives in the beginning, were to open new occupations for women other than governess. In these projects, several women were employed and received training while working; thus, 'alternatives' were demonstrated with its usefulness. For example, Law-Copying Office was a project that makes it as one field of women's occupation. Although the job was to assist solicitors in writing official papers and doing some clerical work, women were thought unable to engage with such job.

Of course a great many objections have been started about the feasibility of law-copying being accomplished by women: fears about our correctness; suggestions that we shall send in the work behind time; more than hints about the impossibility of our undertaking night-work (as if all law-copying was obliged to be done under cover of the night): so perhaps a list of the work that has been finished and sent home during the past week from the office may be desirable; and no doubt the friends of this movement will be as

interested to hear as we to tell, that since last Friday we have copied (besides two very long manuscripts, and forty circular letters).<sup>26)</sup>

Likewise, in Victoria Press, some women were employed as printers and compositors. Women had been excluded from the London Society of Compositors, which had long history from 1801, and this Society strongly objected to the Victoria Press. It was often used as a reason for objection that women could not endure the unhealthy conditions, which were accompanied with printing work. However, Press demonstrated such view was not true by improving the printing environment. "For instance, the imperfect ventilation, the impurity of air being increased by the quantity and bad quality of the gas consumed, and not least by the gin, rum, and brandy, so freely imbibed by printers."<sup>27)</sup> Also, in the Press "each compositor at the Victoria Press is provided with a high stool, seated on which she can work as quickly as when standing."<sup>28)</sup>

Evidently shown from these examples, they tried to expand the possible ways of life for women with the undeniable evidence. When women were thought to make her living by only being a governess, this certainly brought impact to the society

#### **(4) Exploring learning/teaching strategy for lower middle-class women**

Also, both EWJ and SPEW explored teaching/learning strategy that could assist effectively the lower middle-class women. It is unable to show as obvious forms like "tutorial class" in 'British adult education', but the feminists looked for the ways of how to provide training and learning opportunities for the lower middle-class women, who had been educated mostly within the domestic sphere.

A learning/teaching strategy could be found in the Law-Copying Office project. After only one year of business, they showed the 'steps' below so that many other women could follow.

The first step towards the establishment of one is to secure the patronage of the solicitors of the town, to induce them to promise that, as soon as the daughter of their ruined fellow-townsmen is well-qualified, they will give her a share of their custom. The next step is to send her to town to learn the business under Miss Rye's instruction, at 12, Portugal Street. Miss Rye would charge £5; and as she might board and lodge at the Ladies' Home, 51, Charlotte Street, for ten shillings a week, the expense would not be great, as the business can be thoroughly well learnt in six months. When qualified to commence business, little or no capital would be required; (for she must lodge somewhere, and the office would serve as her sitting-room); a desk, some pens, and a small supply of parchments and paper would suffice. She would be paid at the regular rate of law stationer's charges, and if the solicitors were friendly towards her, and she

did the work well, she would be able to live, and by degrees, as the custom increased, could take a female clerk under her –perhaps, in time, two or three –and so gradually work her way up till she earned a good maintenance.<sup>29)</sup>

Another example for exploring learning/teaching strategy for women would be Ladies' Institute. The plan for such institute was proposed in 1859, and its aim was 'to meet the requirements of a HOME FOR LADIES, in combination with a TRAINING INSTITUTION for girls and adults as governesses, book-keepers, clerks, and secretaries'; also, it was 'intended to supply a want seriously and increasingly felt, i.e. by scientific training, to turn to practical account the ordinary desultory education of girls' schools.'<sup>30)</sup> According to the 'Notice', which was distributed in 1860, Ladies' Institute was consisted of the following five departments: Reading Room, EWJ office, Register for work, meeting room, and SPEW office<sup>31)</sup>. In Reading Room, women visitors could read daily, weekly newspapers, magazines, and review. This room was adjoining lunch room and postal service. EWJ office was the place where letters from women and employers gathered from all over the country as well as the place for editing. Therefore, there was a Register for work, acted as employment agency, where women can find occupations.

As shown from the examples of Law-Copying Office and Ladies' Institute, the methods and learning environment for the lower middle-class women were considered carefully, based on understanding of their situations and needs. These were generated through the interactions between the feminists who were in the upper middle-class and women learners who were in the lower middle-class.

## Conclusion

This paper was to critically examine the framework of 'British adult education' from the perspective of women and work, with intention to create the foundation for new ways of historical survey on adult education. Firstly, the three prominent researches in the history of 'British adult education' were reviewed. Peers, Kelly and Fieldhouse sketched out, in different ways, the historical development and characteristics of 'British adult education', which reflected the social and political context of the time and the positions they were in. Furthermore, these researches were examined, once more, from the perspective of women. None of them excluded women from their historical descriptions, but discussed it only within the framework of 'British adult education'. Therefore, they were able to capture the aspects of woman learners and their learning that were secondary to male learners. The historical surveys with such attitudes must be influencing the understanding of and strategy for adult education practice.

As a fundamental step towards new ways of historical researches on adult education, I examined educational aspects of an early feminism movement. In this movement, there were some educational provisions were made to the lower middle-class women who felt difficulties in having means for living. Although this is concerned with adults learning/teaching, it has

been outside of British adult education. With this examination, I could point out that in this movement, i) its educational provision was played a part of the social movement that aimed for the emancipation of women, ii) although the feminists were the provider of vocational training and learning, the focus was also on understanding the women's situation and meeting their needs, iii) they also advocated 'alternatives' to the ways of making a living, by employing and training women in new occupation, iv) they explored learning/teaching strategies in order to help them pursue their occupational independence.

- 1) "The 1919 report: the final and interim reports of the Adult Education Committee of the Ministry of Reconstruction 1918-1919", Department of Adult Education, University of Nottingham, 1980
- 2) Albert Mansbridge, the founder of WEA, described "tutorial class" as 31 students and teachers although it was constituted by one tutor and 30 students (Mansbridge, A., "University Tutorial Classes: a study in the development of higher education among working men and women," Longmans, 1913).
- 3) Thompson, D., "Outsiders: class, gender and nation," Verso, 1993
- 4) Peers, R., "Adult Education: A comparative study", Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1959, p.vi
- 5) *ibid.*, p.346
- 6) Kelly, T., "A History of Adult Education in Great Britain", Liverpool University Press, 1970, p.81
- 7) *ibid.*, p.181
- 8) *ibid.*, p.vi
- 9) Fieldhouse et al., "A History of Modern British Adult Education", NIACE, 1996, p.399
- 10) *ibid.*, p.400
- 11) *ibid.*, p.401
- 12) Peers, *op. cit.*, p.148
- 13) *ibid.*, p.173: He showed a statistics of proportion of women students in tutorial classes from 1912 to 1955 as evidence that demonstrates the increasing number of women learners. According that statistics, the percentage of women increased from 16.5% to 55.0%.
- 14) Kelly, *op. cit.*, p.227
- 15) *ibid.*, p.302
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